

1 A. Well, it was my feeling that we didn't have,
2 didn't have experienced professional sports management on --
3 anywhere near enough of the football teams that were
4 members of our league.

5 Q. It is correct, is it not, Mr. Bassett, that the
6 original concept of the United States Football League was
7 to play football on the spring?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. When you first signed on as an owner, what was
10 your understanding as to when the US Football League was
11 going to play football?

12 A. In the spring.

13 Q. Were you interested in playing football in the
14 fall at the time you became a USFL owner?

15 A. Not a bit.

16 Q. Did there come a time in the life of the United
17 States Football League when consideration was given by the
18 league to switching from the spring to the fall?

19 A. Yes, there was.

20 Q. To the best of your recollection, who within the
21 United States Football League was the first person to
22 advance that proposal?

23 A. Donald Trump.

24 Q. When did Mr. Trump become an owner of a United
25 States Football League franchise?

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

-----X

UNITED STATES FOOTBALL LEAGUE, et al., :

Plaintiffs, :

84 Civ. 7484
(PKL)

-against- :

DEPOSITION

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE, et al., :

Defendants. :

-----X

This is the Deposition of JOHN F. BASSETT, taken on the 4th day of December, 1985, at the offices of McCarthy & McCarthy, Barristers & Solicitors, 49th floor, Toronto Dominion Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

JOHN F. BASSETT personally appeared before me, Gary D. Marjerrison, Verbatim Reporter, and was produced as a witness in the above-entitled matter, whose oath-taking was administered by Richard B. Miner, Esq., Barrister & Solicitor, and was thereupon examined and interrogated as is herinafter set forth.

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A. The operating loss of -- loss of the United States Football League for the first two seasons.

55. Q. All right, at the time you wrote the letters of October 11th, 1983, and the -- the letter which has been marked Exhibit 110, were you by then, at both times, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the league?

A. Yes, sir.

56. Q. I'd like to show you a document -- the next Exhibit which we'll mark as Exhibit -- marked as Exhibit 1605, which is an article from the Washington Post, dated June 24, 1984. I'd like to direct your attention, Mr. Bassett, to a quote, and it appears in the second and -- the third and fourth paragraph.

A. Yes.

57. Q. Maybe the easiest thing to do is just read it into the record. This article refers to you as an owner of teams in the Canadian Football League and the World Football League and the U.S.F.L.'s most experienced pro sports owner. And then quotes you as saying, quote, "...I think the greatest problem the U.S.F.L. faces is realistic financial management of franchises. I'm like John the Baptist running through the (league) meetings and I keep saying, saying, saying, 'Mind your costs.' We pay far too much for everything. You have to crawl before you walk, walk before you run. When Burt Reynolds makes

a movie he gets big bucks but the stunt guy that wrecks cars shouldn't get the big bucks. Too many replacement parts are making too much money in our league. We've got coaches and general managers and chief executive officers making more money than guys in the same positions in the N.F.L. and that's a joke. I always say a first-time owner is entitled to loose 10 million before he learns the business. Well, I lost my 10 million way back when and I don't intend to do it again." close quote. Did you make a statement -- that statement to Mr. Comrades (phon) in or about June of '84?

A. Yes.

58.

Q. And did that express your views as of that time?

A. As of June 24th, 1984, absolutely.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT 1605:

A copy of an article from
the Washington Post,
dated June 24, 1984.

BY MR. FISKE:

59.

Q. Well, let me show you another document, Mr. Bassett, which we've marked as Exhibit 1606, which is an article from the Tampa Tribune, dated December 13, 1984; which is an article by Tom Ford, the Tribune Sports Writer. And again, I'd

like to direct your attention to a quotation that appears maybe four fifths of the way down, the first paragraph.

A. Hm-hmm (affirmative).

60. Q. Which says, -- again, quoting, it says, "...The original concept, said Bassett, (quote) 'was one of the great ideas of all time and one of the most mismanaged.' We started as a Honda Civic league, now we're a Cadillac Seville league. It's ridiculous." (close quote). Did you make that statement to Mr. Ford, in or about December ---

A. Yes.

61. Q. Now, -- And did that express your views as of that time?

A. --- Yes ---

62. Q. What -- what -- what was the original U.S.F.L. concept, as you understood it in that context; the context of this quotation?

A. It's a very simple concept, which was the -- professional football is the most attractive professional sport in America and it only is played in the -- in the fall. No other attractive product does that: like a television show, it goes for 9 months or 10 months. So, Mr. Dixon's idea was to take an attractive product and put it in a different season and I agreed with that concept.

63. Q. And when you said, "...we started as a Honda Civic league, now we're a Cadillac Seville league", what did you mean by that?

A. I meant that when -- when we started, under the original confines of the Dixon Philosophy, it was essentially tailor your revenues -- I mean your -- your expenses to your revenues. And our revenues were maybe 25% of the N.F.L. teams' revenue at that time, and therefore, our costs should have been in line with our revenues.

64. Q. And when you said that the original U.S.F.L. concept, quote, "...was one of the most mismanaged", what did you mean by "mismanaged" in that context?

A. Well, it was my feeling that we didn't have experienced, professional sports management on -- anywhere near enough of the football teams that were members of our league.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1606: A copy of an article by Tom Ford, Sports Writer for the Tampa Tribune, dated December 13, 1984.

BY MR. FISKE:

65. Q. It is correct, is it not, Mr. Bassett, that you
-- that the original concept of the United States Football
League was to play football on (sic) the spring?

A. Yes, sir.

66. Q. When you first signed on as an owner, what was
your understanding as to when the U.S. Football League was going
to play football?

A. In the spring.

67. Q. Were you interested in playing football in the
fall at the time you became a U.S.F.L. owner?

A. Not a bit.

68. Q. Did there come a time in the life of the United
States Football League when consideration was given by the
league to switching from the spring to the fall?

A. Yes, there was.

69. Q. To the best of your recollection who within the
United States Football League was the first person to advance
that proposal?

A. Donald Trump.

70. Q. And when did Mr. Trump become an owner of a
United States Football League franchise?

A. I believe after the first season, he bought the
New Jersey Generals from Mr. Duncan.

71. Q. And did there come a time when a committee was formed within the U.S. Football League to evaluate, among other things, the question of what season of the year you should play?

A. I -- I don't recall if there was a committee. It was a continuing dialogue among all the owners.

72. Q. Was there a committee within the league called the Long Range Planning Committee?

A. Yes, there was.

73. Q. Were you a member of that committee---

A. --- Yes, I was.

74. Q. Let me show you a document which has been marked as Exhibit 320, which is a memorandum from Commissioner Simmons to Owners, Presidents, General Managers and Coaches, as of June 21, 1984, announcing -- which contains among other things, the membership on the different committees. Do you have that in front of you?

A. Yes, I do, sir.

75. Q. And do you see on page 2 a list of the membership of---

A. --- Yes ---

76. Q. --- the Long-Range Planning Committee?

A. Hm-hmm (affirmative).

77. Q. And did that accurately reflect the membership of the committee ---

78. A. --- Yes, it does ---
Q. --- as of that time?

A. Yes, sir.

79. Q. Now, let me show you, Mr. Bassett, a document which has been produced from the files of the Tampa Bay Football Partners Limited, which is marked as Exhibit -- previously marked as Exhibit 702; which is a memorandum from Commissioner Simmons to Joseph Canizaro, with copies to yourself, Don Klosterman, Paul Martha and Donald Trump. And the copy we have indicates something that looks like a -- some kind of a marking over your name. Do -- do you have that document in front of you?

A. Ya.

80. Q. And attached to that memorandum is the -- the memorandum from Mr. Simmons to Mr. Canizaro says, quote, "...Interesting viewpoint from a respected sports columnist from Denver", and there is attached to the memo an article from -- by a man named Dick Connor; caption is "Is Trump playing cards right?"

A. Hm-hmm (affirmative).

81. Q. Did you receive a copy of that memorandum and that article ---

A. --- Yes ---

82. Q. --- back in June of '84?

A. Yes.

83. Q. Do you remember a time in the summer of '84, Mr. Bassett, when there was consideration given by the league, as a whole -- owners as a group, to whether they would vote to play in the spring or the fall?

A. Yes.

84. Q. And a vote was taken at a league meeting?

A. Chicago.

85. Q. Right. And what was the result of that vote?

A. 16 to 1, or 16 to 2, to go to the fall.

86. Q. And how did you vote at that time?

A. We voted to go to the fall.

87. Q. And could you just briefly give us the reason why you did that?

A. It was obvious to me -- we voted to give Mr. Einhorn what we thought, at the time, was a 30 to 60 day opportunity to negotiate with the 3 American television networks for fall contract, and that's why we voted as a -- to go to the fall, as a sign of solidarity within the league.

88. Q. What were your personal views, at the time, as to your preference for -- season of the year?

A. --- My personal -- my personal view never changed from the time I told David Dixon, in my office in Toronto, in 1981 or '82, that I wanted to play springtime football.

89. Q. Let me ---

A. But it doesn't mean I'm right.

90. Q. Let me show you, Mr. Bassett, another newspaper article, which we marked as Exhibit 1607; which is an article from the St. Petersburg Times, of December 13, 1984. Directing your attention to about, oh, a third of the way down the first column there's a quote attributed to you, which says, quote, "...'Here's very simply what happened' he said, 'The essential reason we're in the fall is because they couldn't afford to play in the spring, and they couldn't afford to play in the spring because they didn't know how to manage their teams. Their wallets were bigger than their management skills.'..." Did you make that statement to Mr. Luttermoser, in or about,---

A. Luttermoser?

91. Q. Yes, Luttermoser.

A. Yes.

92. Q. And was that your view at that time?

A. Yes.

93. Q. And when you refer to "they" in that statement, who are you referring to?

A. The majority of my colleagues, ownership colleagues, in the United States Football League.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1607: A copy of an article by
John Luttermoser, in the
St. Petersburg Times,
dated December 13, 1984.

BY MR. FISKE:

94. Q. All right, let me ask you, Mr. Bassett, if you
recall in the spring of 1985, appearing at half-time---

A. --- Yes.

95. Q. --- on an interview with Keith Jackson of A.B.C.?

A. Yes, I recall that.

96. Q. Yes.

A. In New Jersey.

97. Q. Right. Let me show you a document which we
marked as Exhibit 1608, which is captioned, "3/24/85 Bassett
Interview". And direct your attention to the top of page 2. And
I'll just read you the question -- or his statement and your
statement; it starts: Jackson: quote, "John, I know that you
have been a quite outspoken advocate of maintaining a
springtime schedule for the U.S.F.L." This is Bassett, quote,
"Yes, I have for many reasons. I believe that the American
public has proven both in the stands and through your network
and ESPN that they enjoy professional football on (sic) the
spring. (period) My point is very clear - (dash) I just believe

that the owners in our league have priced themselves out of spring football and it's their fault, it isn't the fans' fault or the network's fault, or anybody else's and, you know, I believe that you have to walk before you run and run before you fly and, you know, I hope we stay there and I'm working to see that we do, because you know they only used to play tennis from June to September, the golf tour only used to be 4 months, so there's no magic about the fall for football. Football is the great American past time, people like it, they're going to the games, we have some great players, good quality football and I think it ought to stay where it is." Did you make that statement on Mr. Jackson's program?

A. Yes.

98. Q. And did that express your views as at the time?

A. --- Yes ---

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1608: A copy of a document, entitled
3/24/85 Bassett Interview.

BY MR. FISKE:

99. Q. I'm going to show you a document, Mr. Bassett, which we marked as Exhibit 1609. Exhibit 1609, which is an article from the Associated Press, on April 25, 1985. And I'd like to direct your attention to the very last paragraph, which

says, quote, "Our guys have made ABC the bad guys. (period) We were happy as hell with the (original) contract..." and then it says, "...which Bassett negotiated". The quote picks up, "...It was only when the management of our teams got out of whack that ABC became the bad guys." Did you make that statement in or about April of 1985?

A. Yes.

100. Q. And did that express your views as of that time?

A. Yes.

101. Q. And did you, Mr. Bassett, have a -- negotiate the original contract?

A. As part of a committee.

102. Q. Who else was on that committee?

A. I can't -- I don't recall, four or five. I remember Mr. Duncan, Mr. Daniels, myself, Mr. Spevak (phon) ended up really doing it, I believe, in Detroit.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1609: A copy of an article from the Associated Press, dated April 25, 1985.

BY MR. FISKE:

103. Q. I'm showing you documents which we marked at Exhibit 1611, which is an article from Sports Illustrated, captioned, "Rebels with a good cause".

A. Hm-hmm (affirmative).

104. Q. Do you have that in front of you, Mr. Bassett?

A. Yes.

105. Q. Let me direct your attention to page 3 of that article, in the first column about two thirds of -- or about three quarters of the way down.

A. Hm-hmm (affirmative).

106. Q. There's a quote attributed to you which says, quote, "...Everybody else was spending his way out of the spring' close quote, 'he says', quote, "You could just see the league coming apart. Guys would loose three games and they'd go out and buy the Pittsburgh Steelers' offensive line. They'd win the championship, but they'd lose \$10 million." close quote.

Did you make that statement to Miss Lieber?

A. Yep.

107. Q. That expressed your views as at -- of that time?

A. Yes, it did.

108. Q. Were you referring to any particular situation when you referred to someone going out and buying the Pittsburgh Steelers' offensive line?

5
A. Yes, the Michigan Panthers, in the first year, after -- when they were one and three.

109. Q. Directing your attention to the column on the right, the far right, and quote -- it starts about half way down, quote, "...They spent too much on every conceivable budget item. People didn't act in a professional businesslike manner, except our team. The original concept worked; it was the people who screwed it up. Now, instead of making money, we're losing our aases. Our payroll is 2½ times what it's supposed to be. We never budgeted \$800,000.00 this year to help save the L.A. franchise." Did you make that statement to Ms. Lieber?

A. Yes.

110. Q. And did that express your views as of that time?

A. Yes.

111. Q. And when you referred to the original concept in that quotation, what were you referring to?

A. The Dixon Concept.

112. Q. Just let me read you the next quotation, quote, "It's very difficult to keep your enthusiasm up in the face of horrible decisions. And some of them I've made. I'll admit that. We never should have given Eddie Einhorn, (the owner of Chicago's U.S.F.L. franchise, which is inactive this season) the chance to negotiate with television for a fall league. But at time -- at the time we were at the end of our second year, and

we had lost 100 million. We were forced to go to the fall. When he couldn't negotiate a TV contract within 60 or 90 days, we should have either gone out of business or voted to go back to the spring." Did you make that statement?

A. Yes.

113. Q. And did that express your views at that time?

A. Yes.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1611: A copy of an article by Jill Lieber, in Sports Illustrated.

BY MR. FISKE:

114. O. I'm showing you, Mr. Bassett, a document which we marked as Exhibit 1612, which is a copy of an article from Sport Magazine; which appeared in the July issue of this year.

A. Where is this from, I'm sorry?

115. Q. Sport Magazine. And I'd like to direct your attention to about -- to the 2nd page, about two thirds of the way down. It says, "On the first three years of U.S.F.L. operations: 'Total and complete hodgepodge. Jealousies. Everybody fighting for their own interests. These guys prove they can't run pro sports franchises. They come into a new business, say they're going to be smart enough to follow the

game plan, and none of them do it. They all fell in love with their football coaches, tried to buy them the best players and blew the whole thing right of whack." Did you make that statement to Mr. Drury, Bob Drury, of Sport Magazine?

A. I don't recall Mr. Drury. I've never seen this before.

---DEFENDANTS' EXHIBIT NO. 1612 A copy of an article by Bob Drury, in Sport Magazine.

BY MR. FISKE:

116. Q. Mr. Bassett, I have one last document to show you.

A. Okay.

117. Q. It's a document that's been previously marked; it's N.F.L. Exhibit 1068, and ask you whether or not you recognize the handwriting on it?

A. I recognize it.

118. Q. Is it yours?

A. Yes.

120. Q. Could you tell us what this all relates to? Do you recall?

A. Just what it says. It's a merger plan. A merger proposal.

5
121. Q. Okay. And merger with whom?

A. The National Football League.

122. Q. And did you discuss that plan with any other
U.S.F.L. owners?

A. Yes.

10
123. Q. Where?

A. I don't recall, there were numerous league
meetings.

124. Q. It was at a league meeting -- one or more league
meetings?

A. I beg your pardon?

125. Q. Was this plan discussed with other owners at one
or more league meetings---

A. --- I don't recall. I would sit at my desk, in
Tampa, and do all kinds of dittles on all sorts of things. I --
I don't recall what day or when that was developed.

126. Q. Okay.

A. There's no date on there. That's not my writing.

127. Q. Okay, you didn't print any date on it?

A. No.

128. Q. And the 3/27 at '85, that appears in the upper
left hand corner -- upper right hand corner is not in your
handwriting?

A. No, it isn't.

129. Q. So, your testimony is you don't recall when you prepared this---

A. --- No, I don't recall when.

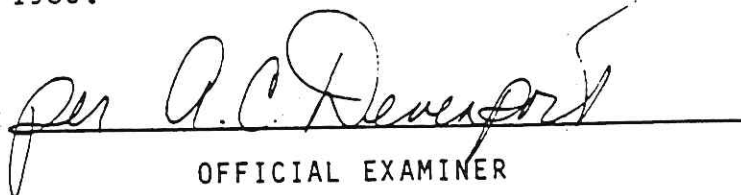
MR. FISKE: We have no more questions. The record should reflect that the Deposition started at 9:15 (sic) with the administration of the oath, and concluded at 10 o'clock.

Certified Transcript.



VERBATIM REPORTER

I hereby certify the foregoing to be the Deposition of JOHN F. BASSETT, taken before me on the 4th day of December, 1985.



OFFICIAL EXAMINER